CHAPTER - XI

Conclusion

The history of the extension of Kāmarūpa with special reference to Puṇḍravardhana is a very interesting topic in the annals of Kāmarūpa.

Never earlier both the topics were dealt under one roof. Most of the books of history of Kāmarūpa, so far political aspect is concerned, are having similar approaches. They dealt with the political history of the Varmans, Sālastambhas, Pālas and Devas. But never they dealt with the history of Puṇḍravardhana separately.

If we go through the different phases of the political history of Kāmarūpa as dealt here we notice the rising power of the Varmans in the post-Gupta period. Although the contemporary Varman kings to the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta and his two other successors had maintained a good link with the Gupta kings contemporary to them more or less as overlord. But since the time of Mahendravarman whose performance of his two horse sacrifices and most specifically the Kāmarūp king Bhūtivarman who, although died after his horse sacrifice, his successful victo-
ries threw out the Gupta allegiance and Bhūtivarman settled many Brāhmaṇas in Chandrapuri-viṣaya, the bordering region of the Gupta and Varman kingdom. The then Gupta kings being very weak could not check the rising power of the Varmans who established the very extensive kingdom not only within Assam, i.e. Kāmarūpa, but also extended it in north Bengal, i.e. in Puṇḍravardhana.

This rising trend of the Varman power did not stop but continued till the time of Bhāskaravarman, the ‘King of Eastern India’. Being contemporary to the Emperor of Kaṇauj having friendship with him, i.e. Harṣavardhana, Bhāskaravarman defeated the Gauḍa king Saśāṅka and compelled him to take shelter at Orissa. The empire of Bhāskaravarman touched the fringe of China in the north, Sadiyā in the East, Purnea, i.e. Bihar in the west and sea in the South, a very very extensive one. What is meant to be said is that Kāmarūpa comprised and even covered Puṇḍravardhana, Samataṭa, Tripurā, Davāka etc. including Chitāgong, Komilla, Rangpur in the south; in the north the boundary of Kāmarūpa extended up tpto Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and the southern part of China.

In this regard the account of Hiuen Tsang helps us to have the glimpse over the exploits of Bhāskaravarman.
After the death of Saśāṅka it was Hiuen Tsang who visited various places of Bengal. It was roughly about 638 A.D. Besides Kājaṅgala he mentioned four kingdoms of Bengal proper. These are Puṇḍravardhana, Karṇaṅsuvaṅṇa, Tāmralipti and Samataṭa. The first two were the then component parts of Saśāṅka's kingdom in North Bengal and the Northern part of Western Bengal including Vardhamāna, Birbhūm, Nadia and Murshidabad districts. Hiuen Tsang named the capital of each kingdom. But he did not refer the name of any king. By this he meant that when he visited these areas the same were already included in the dominion of Harṣa. His visit started earlier appears to be completed by 643 A.D.

He also visited Kāmarūpa. He then found most of these kingdoms were included to Harṣa's kingdom. Also some got included to Bhāskarvarman's realm.

From the account of Hiuen Tsang it is evident that the death of Saśāṅka has weakened the unity of North and West Bengal and these formed separate kingdoms in 638 A.D. and shortly these were conquered by Bhāskaravarman. The issue of grant from Karṇaṅsuvaṅṇa speak of his control there where he established his victorious camp. Also it is probable that after Saśāṅka's death his dominions in Bengal, Orissa was conquered by Harṣa. After
Harṣa’s death turmoil followed and taking advantage of that Bhāskara won over Bengal portion of Harṣa’s kingdom and pitched his victorious camp at Karṇasuvan. His occupation of Bengal took place in 648 A.D. as he is referred to as the King of Eastern India in Chinese annals.

As referred to in the ‘Life’ of Hiuen Tsang, Bhāskaravarman proceeded with his elephant army having 20,000 in number and met Harṣa in Kajangala at Rajmahal some times in 642 A.D. along with 30,000 ships and passed to the same place. These evidence speak of the effective control of the Kāmarūpa king Bhāskaravarman over the dominions of Śaśāṅka.

It is also mentioned in the ‘Life’ that when Bhāskara met Harṣa at Kajangala the latter had just returned from his victorious campaign in Kongoḍa, the kingdom of the Sailodbhavas, who were formerly subservient to Śaśāṅka.

But Hiuen Tsang’s account as preserved in the Records does not refer to Puṇḍravardhana and Karṇasuvan as subject to Bhāskaravarman. Regarding Kongoḍa it states that the soldiers ruled the area by force the neighbouring provinces so that no one can resist them. From this it is evident that the dominions of Śaśāṅka was conquered, in and outside Bengal proper, respectively by Bhāskaravarman and Harṣa. Conquest took place some
times, between 638 to 642 A.D. When Hiuen Tsang 637-638 A.D. visited, Magadha was under control of Pūrṇavarman, last of the line of king Aśokarāja, but in about A.D. 641 it was conquered by Harṣavardhana after his conquest of Kājaṅgala. But it is true that Hiuen Tsang visited Bhāskara’s victorious camp (temporary capital) Karṇasuvanṇa which was under his full control. That was why he was able to build his temporary capital at Karṇasuvanṇa, where Hiuen Tsang stayed for a month as State Guest as the Master of Buddha Dharma with Bhāskara, though Puṇḍravardhana had its distinct entity as the part of the sovereign state of Gauḍa flourished during the time of Śaśāṅka. It is almost a powerful state under Khaḍga, Rātas and Chandras from long time back after Bhāskara. As it was very fertile Harṣa wanted to bring it under his dominance. It was eyed upon by various rulers of north and south. But even then Kāmarūpa was able to resist their onslaught. At the weak moment of Śaśāṅka Karṇasuvanṇa and Puṇḍravardhana was own over by the joint efforts of Harṣa and Bhāskara. And Bhāskara was honoured with the title as the Lord of Eastern India. Hiuen Tsang also accepted this view. He also called him as the Lord of Eastern India. Since then the political, cultural and economic relation began with Puṇḍravardhana. Hence a good relation of the Kāmarūpa king
was established over Puṇḍravardhana and the same relation also continued under the later rulers.

Thus, it may be stated that after the death of Šašāṅka his empire faced disruption and his vast dominons and the component parts declared independence and became separate states. The opportunity of this disruption was taken by Bhāskaravarman and Harṣavardhana who conquered respectively his former dominons in and outside Bengal. The political disintegration of the Gauḍa empire was referred to in the Buddhist work Ārya-Mañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa.

The post-Varman kings Sālastambhas, Pālas and Devas played a very dominant role in the history of Eastern India which was part of pan Indian political exercises. No valorous king of India whether of north, south or of the west considered his conquests complete unless he touches Prāgjyotīśa-Kāmarūpa and Puṇḍravardhana.

It requires special reference here that since the time of Bhūtivarmā and Bhāskaravarmā Puṇḍravardhana being part of Kāmarūpa in the post Samudragupta period was the very prosperous zone; and the prosperity of this zone attracted the attention of the kings having pan India aptitude. Situated in the midst of the trade route contiguous to sea having sea ports and
big hinterland having caravan routes touching China in the north, Peshwar in the west, Surāt in the west, Puṇḍravardhana was the centre of great economic transaction touching even Burma in the east besides the sea trade that covers Ceylon, Arabia, Madagascar, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and east Asian islands.

Puṇḍravardhana was a unique feature of Kāmarūpa Empire. It is noteworthy that Puṇḍravardhana very many times was attacked by the kings of west, north and south and at times when the position of Kāmarūpa kings were weak the capital of Kāmarūpa was shifted from Kāmarūpa Nagara to Śrīi-Durjaya etc.

But most of the times Kāmarūpa was able to maintain its control over Puṇḍravardhana. The administrative set up of Puṇḍravardhana was a very unique one. Although originated since the Mauryas Puṇḍravardhana was the strength of the Gupta administration under Kauṭilyan State system as in Arthaśāstra. But although the interpretation varies as to the very nature of its foundation but gradually Puṇḍravardhana formed either from the Puṇḍras or from the Paunḍras, either the north as Puṇḍra and the south as Paunḍra, but ultimately it became one unit having very many administrative branches, e.g. Maṇḍala, Viṣaya, Grāma and Bithi. But it may be stated that the basic structure of administration of Puṇḍravardhana tallies with that of Kāmarūpa.
The ancient city of Puṇḍravardhana has been identified with Mahāsthān of present Bogra district. The pedigree of administration was in the vein of Puṇḍravardhana whether of historic period or subsequently under the Mauryas, Guptas, Varmans to Pālas and under the Senas, Chandras etc. It was very extensive in area. It included part of south-eastern Bengal as administrative division. At times it covered the whole of Bengal except a portion of western and north-western Bengal. Besides, in Nidhanpur Inscription of Bhāskaravarman, in Rampāl copperplate and in Paschimbhag copperplates of Śrī-Chandra as well as in the Bhatera seal Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti connotes not only North Bengal but also more or less or almost whole of South Bengal. Under the Chandra and Sena period Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti included the whole of modern Rājshāhi-Dacca presidency division and part of Chittagang Division. Before that if we follow Nidhanpur Inscription and Paschimbhāg Inscription the extension of Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti covers not only Sylhet but also Maimansing, Karimganj and Cachar districts. The reference of 'Himavacca-śikhara' of Damodarpur plates extends Puṇḍravardhana from the summit of the Himalayas in the north to Khaḍī in the Sundarvan region in the south. The Jāhṇavī separated it from the Vardhamāna-bhukti in the west which is
also covered by Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti. The Madhyapāda plate of Viśvarūpa Sena extends its eastern boundary up to the sea, i.e. the Bay of Bengal; even it comprised a part of Tippera. During Vijaysena Khādi-viṣaya was the part of Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti which also covered Vārendri (Vārendryam) under Lakṣmana Sena.

Thus Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti was not only the biggest administrative Division or province of the Gauḍa empire but gradually it covered in its forward march through different periods under the Senas and Chandras, the Chandrapuriviṣaya and the Śrīhaṭṭa-maṇḍala under Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti. The Pattikera, broadly Śrīhaṭṭa, was also under Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti.

Here in this research study a very broad outline of the administrative division of Puṇḍravardhana right from the bhukti to the vithi has been dealt. Possibly, nowhere previously this aspect was broadly discussed. This is a very important feature of the history of the extension of Kāmarūpa with special reference to Puṇḍravardhana. Puṇḍravardhana was not a kingdom but so far its extension is concerned it was very much broad and enormously extensive. Kingdoms came and went but the forward march of Puṇḍravardhana never stopped up to the Chandras and beyond. The administration of Puṇḍravardhana was under the crown prince as found during the Mauryas; the system contin-
ued under the Varmans. It was under Bhāskaravarman under Śrī-Chandra.

Initially there has been attempts dealing with the prehistoric history of Assam during the period of early Aryanisation under the leadership of Naraka who spread Aryanism by settling Brāhmaṇas in Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa. Later under the leadership of Bhagadatta installed by Śrī-Kṛṣṇa Kāmarūpa also expanded to its largest capacity and Bhagadatta earned both name and fame by participating in the Mahābhārata war in favour of the Kauravas along with his Kirāta and China soldiers. He had also marriage relation with the house of the Kurus of Hastināpura. In his later life he had also crossed with Arjuna and Bhīma. The empire of Bhagadatta was a very extensive one, i.e. from Himalayas to the sea touching China covering Nepal. Bhagadatta established a very extensive kingdom touching upto the sea.

The dynasty of the Bhaumas established by Puṣyavarmān was related to the Naraka- Bhagadatta clan who established the lines of the Varmanas, Pālas, Sālastambhas and Devas. Thus it was the dynasty of Naraka-Bhagadatta through Puṣyavarmān who dominated the entire historical period of Kāmarūpa. Assam is also an ethnological museum. Varied races entered in Aassam and got settled. The contribution of the races to the culture and
religion of Assam is an unique phenomenon of Assamese culture. Previously known as Kāmarūpa and Prāgjyotiṣa, this area was the abode of astrology, i.e. the study of the stars. Navagraha-pāhār with its temple worshipping the nine planets still exists. It speaks of a very rich culture that ever contributed to the study of planets and planetary movements and the knowledge is still a very unique feature of the culture of Kāmarūpa. This very phenomenon of study of srars is the practice of the Kalitās, the oldest people of Assam. The Kalitās were one among those of the outer Aryans who were also known as Asuras and were linked with the Iranians. The Alpine brand of this outer Aryans contributed a lot to the racial, linguistic and cultural phenomenon of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. The tribals of this zone, the Bodos, Khasis, Karbis and Rabhas contributed a lot to the culture and religion of this zone. Even the cult of Kāmākhyā, the predominant deity, is having a Kārbi and Khāsi link. She was broadly known as Kā-meī-khā. The Austric and Aryans got mixed with the tribals and formed the greater Assamese society of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa.